United Nations A/72/PV.4

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

4th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 12.05 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Address by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: The seventy-second regular session of the General Assembly is being convened at a time of historic transition in Liberia and during a period of acute challenges to the global order. Today we face the threat of climate change, the violence of terrorism, the risks and indignaty of migration and a nuclear escalation on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, there is a race against time to accommodate a restless, youthful population in search of opportunity and a brighter future.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his election. His progressive and creative leadership assures us of his commitment and his action to reform the United Nations for increased efficiency, better coordination and gender parity by 2021 at the senior leadership level. My delegation is also pleased with the initial steps taken towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I also wish to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. His vast experience and strong diplomatic skills assure us that he will steer the affairs of this session in an effective manner. The Liberian delegation offers him its full cooperation and support.

I would also like to recognize Mr. Peter Thompson of Fiji for his stewardship over the past year, which saw the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the successful conduct of the first Ocean Conference.

Our theme this year is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", which aptly captures a universal aspiration. I hope that, at the conclusion of our deliberations, we will forge a consensus and renew our commitment as leaders to transform the lives of our peoples and meet our responsibilities to our planet. The work of the United Nations has never been more important to the search for peace and sustenance for global stability than it is today.

By its Charter and its purposes, the United Nations continues to represent the genius of our collective ability to live together in peace and harmony. It still offers great hope to a troubled world. Liberians bear

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witness to this truth and remain grateful to the United Nations, and all of its organs and agencies, for the critical security interventions and continued support for Liberia's recovery and democratic aspirations.

Eleven years ago, in September 2006, I stood before the Assembly (see A/61/PV.11) as the newly elected President of the Republic of Liberia and the first woman to be democratically elected as a Head of State on the African continent. When I speak to women in Africa and across the world, I am humbled by the inspiration drawn from my experience. The next generation must belong to women.

Today I address the Assembly for the last time as I bring my two terms of elected office to a close. Liberia is just 22 days away from historic legislative and presidential elections. It will mark the first time in 73 years that political power will be handed over peacefully and democratically from one elected leader to another. That will pave the way for the next generation of Liberians to lead the country into the future.

The election will signal the irreversible course that Liberia has embarked upon to consolidate its young, post-conflict democracy. Democracy is on the march in Liberia and, I believe, on an irreversible path forward on the African continent. I thank all our partners who have made meaningful contributions — financial and in kind — to ensure peaceful elections, and those organizations that will deploy observer missions to attest to the integrity of the election process.

I assumed office after 25 years of development reversal, which was further compounded by a 15-year civil war. We have made great progress and laid the foundation for the next democratic Government. We have reshaped the armed forces of Liberia and the Liberia national police and have professionalized our customs and immigration services and the small Liberian coast guard. We are proud to report that, since the formal turnover of security responsibilities to our Government, Liberia has remained stable, peaceful and secure.

We transformed the economy from a growth rate of less than zero to more than 8.7 per cent in 2013, until the health crisis and plummeting commodity prices brought a downturn to our economic recovery. Liberia has adjusted. We are resilient, and we embrace diversification. Our focus today is on strengthening the agriculture sector for value-addition and infrastructure development, with emphasis on roads and energy industrialization.

Previously dysfunctional public institutions now have the capacity to respond to the needs of our citizens through decentralized county service centres, with ownership by strong local Governments. And from the tragedy of the health crisis, we are strengthening our health-care systems, prioritizing prevention and delivering capacity at the community level. The impact is being felt. Life expectancy progressed from a low 47 years to a hopeful 62 years, with a reduction in maternal deaths from 1,400 to 1,100 — an annual rate of reduction of 3.4 per cent. The poverty rate has decreased from 63.8 per cent in 2067 to 50.9 per cent in 2016.

Infrastructure has been repaired and restored, and we continue to rehabilitate damaged roads and construct new ones. Cities and towns are bustling with new life, thanks to the increasing provision of electricity, potable water and technology. It is now possible to receive voice and data on phones and mobile devices from virtually everywhere in the country, at competitively low prices.

Liberia has enjoyed the benefit of multilateralism through the full support provided by the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). From being a pariah State, Liberia has gradually regained the confidence of nations and has even risen to assume leadership roles in regional bodies — specifically of ECOWAS and the Mano River Union.

I was personally privileged to play a role in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as co-Chair of former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to help frame the African common position as Chair of the African Union high-level committee.

There is so much more to share about Liberia's post-conflict transformation — how we have empowered ordinary citizens and a shared sense of citizenship, giving women, including market and rural women, a voice and the right to be heard. We have continued to transform the health-care and education systems, engender the entrepreneurial spirit in our youth, our vibrant media and our civil society. We are establishing cross-border development corridors to enhance regional trade, and we are strengthening the rule of law to tackle systemic undermining of integrity.

Liberia is experiencing the birth of a post-conflict artistic community in song, hip-hop, painting, poetry, storytelling and fashion.

Liberia has come a long way. We could not have accomplished all of that without the Organization — its political leadership, the generosity of its economic development support, humanitarian contributions and, most important, the stabilization and security provided to our country through the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I applaud you, Mr. President, and your predecessors, the Member States and United Nations civil servants around the world who have sacrificed in order for us to see the very first generation of school-age children growing up in an environment of peace, free of the violence of civil conflict. Liberia's transformation was powered by a world community that made a shared commitment to deliver peace to a country and a subregion beset by civil conflict and cross-border destabilization. The United Nations and its partner nations were of one mind, and from that global unity a new democratic Liberian State was born. Liberia is a post-conflict success story. It is the Organization's post-conflict success story.

As I bid farewell to the Assembly today, and to my fellow Heads of State, I have a few parting thoughts.

First, remember Liberia, which is making vibrant efforts to apply the tenets of democracy. Consider the lives saved, the wealth created, the stability assured because this global body led at a time of great uncertainty in our subregion and around the world. I ask the States Members of the United Nations to continue to lead, to spread the values of democracy, human rights and good governance, while strengthening solidarity for economic transformation and social resilience. It is often in times of transition that great leaders emerge and institutions are strengthened.

Secondly, I recall that two years ago, at its seventieth session, the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Goals that encapsulate the aspirations of Member States to eradicate poverty and reduce, if not eliminate, inequalities within and between countries. Our commitment to achieving the Goals must be unwavering, because progress in that area is inextricably linked to ending conflict and sustaining peace.

Thirdly, real progress remains elusive in the lingering effort to reform the Security Council and make it more responsive to current global realities. The call for that reform must be pursued more robustly towards an early conclusion. Africa's views are well articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. Today African nations are participating in strong regional and subregional bodies, which are evolving — adopting measures to secure and preserve peace and security, while strengthening economic integration.

The United Nations, as the pre-eminent world body, must also continue to evolve to more effectively serve the common interests of all Member States. It must continue to chart the way forward. In its capable hands rest the hope and aspirations for a more just, peaceful and humane world, for the sake of our people and our planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Macron (*spoke in French*): I am privileged to address the General Assembly, and I know to whom I owe this privilege. I owe it to all those who, just over 70 years ago, rose up against a barbaric regime that had seized my country, France. I owe it to the nations that heard the cry of those who resisted and that from the Americas, Africa, Oceania and Asia sent their sons and daughters to France to help. Not all of them were familiar with France, but they knew that

France's defeat would also mean the defeat of the ideals they shared. They were proud of those ideals and were prepared to die to uphold them. They knew that their freedom and values were dependent upon the freedom of other men and other women living thousands of kilometres from them.

I owe the privilege to those who, once the war had ended, dared to attempt reconciliation and built a new international order. I owe it to people who, like René Cassin, understood that human rights were at the very core of international legitimacy. I owe it to people who brought the guilty to justice, tended to the victims and rectified mistakes. I owe it to those who believed that the values that the war had trampled must be restored to their rightful place.

Tolerance, freedom and humanity are the values on which the United Nations was built. And it was not because those values were beautiful but rather because they were just and made it possible to avoid the worst.

I do not speak of all this merely to talk about history, but because today I hear several of our colleagues talking about the future of our world, and forgetting somewhat where we have come from. What might seem exotic and far removed from our immediate interests is perhaps what determines and will determine most what lies ahead for us.

My country might have a unique place in the international order, but that means that it is also indebted to all those whose voices have gone unheard. I know that the duty of France is to speak for those whose voices are not heard. If we speak for them, we also speak for ourselves — now and for the future. Today I would like to speak for those forgotten voices.

I have heard Bana, who lives in Aleppo and whose voice I want to bring here. She has lived under the horror of bombings, of police and militia. She has lived in refugee camps. The Syrian people have suffered enough for the international community to acknowledge its collective failure and to question its methods.

To achieve just and lasting peace, we must focus urgently on a political settlement to the crisis by way of a transition, as the Security Council has called for through its unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015). France and its partners have taken the initiative to support the efforts of the United Nations and to design, finally, an inclusive political road map for Syria. That is why I hope that we can establish a contact group made up of all of the five permanent members of the Security Council and relevant stakeholders.

The so-called Astana process can be useful, but it is not enough, and the past few days have revealed many problems. We have to give ourselves the resources we really need to begin negotiations, because the solution will ultimately be a political rather than a military one. It is in the interests of all of us and, of course, in Syrians' interests above all.

In that context, I have already stated what our two red lines are. First, France will not waver where the use of chemical weapons is concerned. The perpetrators of the attack of 4 April must be brought to international justice, and that must never happen again. Secondly, it is absolutely crucial to ensure access to health care for all men and women and enable medical facilities to protect civilians. France will make this one of the priorities of its presidency of the Security Council next month.

When we act to achieve peace in Syria we are acting for the Syrian people, but we are also doing it to protect all of us against Islamist terrorism, because what we are primarily fighting in Syria and in Iraq is terrorism. We are acting for all who perished in attacks in recent months, because jihadi terrorism has struck our fellow citizens across all continents, regardless of religion. We must therefore protect ourselves by joining forces, and security must become our first priority. That is the focus of the initiatives that France has launched for combating terrorists' use of the Internet and all their financing sources. That is why I hope we can organize a conference in 2018 on this effort, which I urge everyone here to become involved in. It is also the focus of the military action that France has undertaken as part of the coalition in Syria and Iraq, in accordance with international law. We are fighting terrorism not only on the military and diplomatic fronts but on the educational, cultural and moral fronts, too. It is part of our efforts in Asia as well as in the Middle East and Africa. And it must bring all of us together.

I have listened to Ousman, a schoolboy in Gao, and I would like to bring his voice in here today. Ousman is growing up in Mali under constant threat from indiscriminate attacks, and yet his only dream is to be able to go to school without risking his life. We are now all engaged in the Sahel — the United Nations, the countries of the region that are participating in the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel, and the European Union and its member States. And I would like to pay tribute to all stakeholders by acknowledging that it is an extremely difficult challenge with a high cost in human lives. Our challenge there is, again, eliminating terrorism and, in order to do that, building national capacities so that States can take charge of their security themselves. Regardless of the resources we put there, our collective effort will not succeed if the countries that are most affected are unable to take on their own responsibilities in that regard.

That is why I have supported the deployment of the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel since my first day in office, and I urge everyone here to mobilize collectively to that end, too. This is also why I want to invest in strengthening our support to African peacekeeping missions, because that is the future. We must all give new thought to the links between peacekeeping, regional organizations and host countries. Our capacity to respond to our peoples' aspirations for peace depends on it. Certainly, a military response can never be the only response. Here I would like to emphasize the importance of a political response, and in that regard I have in mind the implementation of the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and our development policy.

I have also listened to Kouamé, and I want to bring his voice in here today. Left on the roadside, he crossed Africa before putting his fate in the hands of smugglers in Libya. He crossed the Mediterranean and came safely to port when so many others perished at sea. The refugee, the displaced person and the person to whom we give the sad name of migrant has truly become the symbol of our age, of a world where we will never be able to halt the march of despair if we cannot turn the roads of necessity into roads of liberty. Such migrations are the result of politics, climate change or ethnic conflict. They are always the roads taken by necessity. Today necessity is a flight from the persecution of which the Rohingya — more than 400,000 refugees, most of them children — are victims. The military operations there must cease, access to humanitarian aid must be provided and the rule of law must be re-established because, as we know, what is going on is ethnic cleansing. France will take the initiative on this issue in the Security Council.

Necessity means leaving to save one's family when war is raging and when international humanitarian law is no longer respected but becomes a tool to be exploited in the warring parties' strategy of violence, as it is in Syria. It means exile when the defenders of freedom are the first to be targeted by the powers that be. Protecting refugees is a moral and political duty and one in which France is resolved to play its part, by supporting the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees wherever he has to intervene; by opening legal paths to resettlement in areas closest to the conflict zones in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey as well as in the Niger and Chad; and by defending the right to asylum and unequivocal respect for the Geneva Conventions.

In Paris on 28 August, we brought together the African and European countries that have been most directly affected by the migration flows along the central Mediterranean route. We adopted a road map whose priority is combating the smugglers who traffic in despair. We must put an end to these intolerable violations of fundamental human rights by working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to establish a humanitarian infrastructure and by helping countries of origin and transit to better control migration flows.

But while short-term responses are a necessity for managing crises when we are dealing with terrorism and migration, what is at stake today is our ability to muster the political will to address the underlying causes of these sources of instability. Migration and terrorism represent the biggest political challenges that all of us may ever face. If we are to overcome such moral and civilizational challenges, it will be by pursuing a true policy of development, which is why I have decided that France should play its part by devoting 0.55 per cent of national revenue to public development aid for the next five years.

The President took the Chair.

I am grateful for the applause, but I have to temper it somewhat — first, because I know that some people were expecting more, that such aid is never enough, and that France's response is still not enough, but mainly because it is not money that is the real issue; it is how effectively that money is used. It is what we spend the money on. It is about how we can be better at evaluating and taking responsibility for the money that we all contribute. Of course, I want France to do its part with development aid, but what I really want is for us to bring more innovation and intelligence to

our aid, using different methods and taking on greater responsibility on the ground. That is what I want. The challenge we have today is in ensuring that development aid actually reaches the areas where it is needed, simply and efficiently, calculated correctly and for the purpose it was designed for. That was what we wanted to do with the Alliance for the Sahel, for example, which we launched with the European Union, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

We also have to set clear priorities. The first is investing in education, because it is education that will help us win the fight against the obscurantism that is bringing down entire countries and regions today, both in Africa and the Middle East. I urge the international community to step up in February 2018 in Dakar when we re-establish the World Partnership for Education, which France will co-chair with Senegal. This is a key struggle for us all. We must give girls and boys the opportunity to escape obscurantism and to choose their own future, not the future imposed upon them or the one that we in this Hall would choose for them.

Our second priority is to invest in health and combat major pandemics and malnutrition, because without education or health there can be no hope. In this fight for development, we must also support the role of women, culture and freedom of expression. Wherever the role of women is undermined, there, too, development is undermined, as is a society's ability to assume its rightful place in the world. These are not trivial issues; this is a deep-seated civilizational struggle. It is our struggle and these are our values, which are not relative but universal on all continents and at all latitudes. Wherever culture is undermined, there, too, our collective ability to rise to challenges is undermined.

That is why UNESCO is today such an important organization and has such a key role to play with respect to ensuring a human face for the world at a time when widespread obscurantism seeks to eradicate its unbelievable diversity. We are fighting so that all cultures and languages can be preserved and so that progress can continue to be made.

Freedom of expression, too, is a most urgent issue. The United Nations must protect the freedom of those who think, reflect and express themselves, in particular the freedom of the press. For that reason, I call for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the protection of journalists throughout the world; neither the fight against terrorism nor the more demanding world we are living in can justify any inroads upon that freedom.

Finally, I wish to speak on behalf of my fellow Frenchman Jules, who lives on the island of St. Martin. I am thinking of his house, which lies in ruins, and of his fear that this may happen again because of climate change, which is leading to an increasing number of disasters. The future of the world is that of our planet, which is now taking revenge for the folly of humankind. Nature is calling us to task to shoulder our responsibility of humanity and solidarity. It will not negotiate with us, and humankind must defend itself by protecting it. Extreme weather events are exploding the traditional differences between the North and the South. The most fragile are always the principal victims, swept up in a whirlwind of injustice. We are all affected by climatic changes, from China to the Caribbean, in Russia and in the Horn of Africa.

My country promised, before the Assembly, that we would achieve a universal agreement in Paris. That we did and signed it in this very Hall. That agreement is not up for renegotiation. It binds us and rallies us together. To take it apart would mean unraveling a pact not just between States but also between generations. It can be improved; we can have new contributions and fresh input, but we will not backtrack.

I fully respect the decision of the United States. The door will always be open to it. However, we will continue our work, along with all Governments, local governments, cities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and citizens of the world. We have the strength of pioneers, endurance and the certainty and energy of those who wish to build a better world. That better world will lead to innovation and job creation, despite the beliefs of those who see the future only in terms of the past.

We will build such a world right now by making our national contributions, as France has done by adopting its climate plan, which places us on the road to carbon neutrality. On 12 December, we will be meeting in Paris with those who wish to move forward with real solutions by mobilizing public and private funding. Here I confirm that France will play its full role in this respect by allocating €5 billion per year to climate action between now and 2020.

Our unfolding ambition is reflected in the fact that this very afternoon we will be introducing a global pact

for the environment aimed at shaping international law for the coming century, with the support of the United Nations agencies.

At a time when some would wish us to stop, we must continue to advance, because climate change and extreme weather events will not stop. Our duty of solidarity and humanity will continue.

Behind every one of our decisions are the voices and lives of the invisible masses whom we must defend, because we in turn were defended in the past. Why do we not heed those voices? Why are we not focusing on what 70 years ago gave humankind the strength to believe in itself: planetary responsibility, the desire for mutual assistance and faith in progress?

When I speak of Bana, Ousman, Kouamé and Jules, I speak about all my compatriots and everyone else's compatriots, because our security is their security. We are inextricably linked in a community of fate, today and tomorrow. Global balances have changed radically in recent years and the world has become multipolar once again, so we must learn anew the complexity of dialogue as well as the riches it can bring to us.

Our collective action is coming up against obstacles stemming from State instability. In Libya, six years after the military intervention there, I acknowledge, before the Assembly, France's particular responsibility to ensure that the country regains its stability. The meeting held in La Celle-Saint-Cloud on 25 July enabled us to make progress on the reconciliation necessary for the success of the political process under the auspices of the United Nations. Together with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, we must succeed in 2018 in organizing elections that will mark the restoration of effective State authority. I will do my utmost to achieve that.

Concerning Venezuela, collective action must enable the upholding of democracy and respect for all political movements. We must give no ground to the dictatorial trends that we see today. In Ukraine, too, we must tirelessly work to ensure the upholding of the commitments undertaken, bring about an effective ceasefire and work together with our partners, particularly Germany, to ensure that the parties to the conflict respect international law and end the conflict.

Multilateralism is facing the challenge of nuclear proliferation, unable to ward off threats that we believed to be past but that have re-emerged today. Pyongyang has crossed a major threshold in terms of military escalation. This is an urgent, collective existential threat. North Korea has not to date given any sign of wishing to negotiate. Its authorities are determined to raise the stakes. Our responsibility, together with all of our partners, including China and Russia, is, through resolve, to bring North Korea to the negotiating table for a political settlement to this conflict. France rejects escalation and will not close any door to dialogue, provided that the conditions are met for such a dialogue to promote peace.

It is that same goal that impels me to defend the nuclear agreement with Iran. Our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation enabled us to reach a solid, robust and verifiable agreement on 14 July 2015 and to ensure that Iran will not be able to acquire nuclear weapons. To denounce that now without proposing anything in its place would be a serious mistake, and failing to uphold it would be irresponsible, because it is a helpful agreement that is vital to keeping the peace at a time when the risk of a collapse into a death spiral is genuine. That is what I told the United States and Iran yesterday. For my part, I hope that we will be able to fulfil the agreement, by working to contain Iran's ballistic activity and manage the situation after 2020, which the 2015 agreement does not cover. Let us by all means be more demanding, but certainly not by unwinding the results that previous agreements have already achieved. Look at the mess we are in today. Has the lack of dialogue done anything to contain the situation in North Korea for even a moment? What I want for all of us is a world where dialogue, controls and multilateralism provide us with effective, useful weapons.

I do not know whether, 70 years from now, a future successor of mine will have the privilege of addressing the Assembly. Will multilateralism survive the time of doubt and change that we are going through? The fact is that we should be remembering the state that the world was in 70 years ago, shattered by war and stunned by genocides. Right now we need to rediscover the optimism, ambition and courage with which we met those reasons to doubt and the faith in what unites us. We must restore our trust in the universal founding principles of the United Nations, which protect all of us and guarantee our dignity, all over the world.

But why have we ended up where we are? Because we have allowed the idea to take root that multilateralism is a kind of convenient game for diplomats around a table,

a tool of the weak. That has gone on for years, because we let ourselves believe that our efforts were stronger and more convincing when we acted unilaterally. But it is not true. Because, sometimes out of cynicism, we let ourselves believe that multilateralism could not fix everything, and so we let deregulation of the world take over. We have been slow to address climate change and the new inequalities that unregulated capitalism creates. We have let the voices of discord shout the loudest. And in that game, the loudest voices win. Time and fading memory have made us forget the history that moulded us and allowed the belief to take root that we are stronger without multilateralism. The challenge that our generation faces today is to be able to get our faith back and to show that in today's world, nothing is more effective than multilateralism. And why? Because every one of our challenges is global — terrorism, immigration, climate change, the regulation of the digital world. They all have to be addressed multilaterally and on a global scale.

Every time we turn away from multilateralism, the loudest voice wins. But it is only through multilateralism that we can achieve our vision of the world, because it is universal, not regional. Every time we give up on an idea — for example, that the situation of women concerns some people in parts of the world but not others, or that equality is an issue for one civilization but not others — we are abandoning the universality of the values that have brought us together in this Organization. In some countries we have already ceded the race to the strong. And that is because, every time, the great Powers, seated around the Security Council table, have ceded the race to the strong and to unilateralism, and have failed to live up to agreements they signed themselves. They have failed to uphold the glue that keeps multilateralism together — the rule of law. That is what has got us this far and can build sustainable peace.

Today we need multilateralism more than ever, not because it is a comforting notion, and not because it is somewhere for thinking people to take shelter, but because it is about the rule of law, about interaction between peoples and about equality for us all. It is what will enable us to achieve peace and overcome our challenges. And the United Nations is indeed the Organization that can act in full legitimacy to preserve global equilibrium. That is why I want a more responsible, effective and agile United Nations, and why I fully support the Secretary-General's plans for the Organization and his ambition and commitment to making it equal to the challenges facing our world. We need to get out of our offices and away from meetings with States and Governments and to seek new resources, so that we can see the world as it really is and reconsider some of the dogmas to which we have sometimes clung. We need a Security Council that can make effective decisions, without walling itself off through its right to the veto when mass atrocities are being committed. We need better representation for everyone here and for every continent. We need to coordinate crisis management better with the European Union, the African Union and the key subregional organizations. That is why France will stand beside the United Nations as it implements reform.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it is only in a stronghold such as this that the forgotten voices that I wanted to bring here today can be heard, a stronghold where there is a place for everyone and where everyone can be heard even by those who do not wish to hear. To them I say that a refusal to listen to the oppressed, to victims, allows their miseries to grow and prosper until the day when they overwhelm all the rest of us as well. A refusal to listen means forgetting that at one time or another in our history, we were the oppressed, and others heard our voices. It means forgetting that our safety and security is theirs too, that their lives are connected to ours, and we cannot remain unscathed in a world that is going up in flames. A refusal to listen to those who call for help means believing that walls and borders will protect us.

But it is not walls that protect us, it is our willingness to act and to change the course of history and our refusal to allow history to be written without us even as we imagine we are safe. It is our sovereignty and our sovereign use of force in the service of progress that protects us. A nation's independence lies in its interdependence. A refusal to listen to those voices would mean believing that their despair is not ours, that we will always enjoy benefits that they can only dream of. But what if those benefits are our whole planet — what if they are peace, justice and freedom? Do we believe that we are the only ones who should enjoy them, tucked away in some corner? If we do not defend those shared benefits, we will all be doomed. We will be watching fires burn that history will blow back on our own children tomorrow.

Today, more than ever, those shared benefits, our common goods, represent our shared interests.

Our security is their security, and there are no sides, no division between those who believe in the rule of law and multilateralism and those who believe in a pragmatic unilateralism. That is a false notion. Our real effectiveness is playing out in this struggle right here. That is why I want to join with everyone here today, united in a belief in a strong, responsible multilateralism. That is our generation's responsibility, if we do not want to abandon ourselves to fatalism. There is only one kind of courage we need, which is to listen to those voices and not to deviate from the mark we wish to leave on history. We must be constantly aware that we must work to reconcile our interests and our values. Our security is the common good of our planet. Our generation has no choice. It must speak for today and for tomorrow.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): This is the eighth and last time I address the General Assembly in my capacity as President of Colombia. A lot has happened since 24 September 2010, when I made my first speech (see A/65/PV.15). Colombia has been transformed positively, and the world has experienced progress and setbacks, of which we have all been witnesses, victims or protagonists.

Here is a paradox: I did my first televised address to Colombians as their leader from New York in September 2010, one day before addressing the Assembly. What was the reason for that intervention? I announced to Colombia and to the international community that our armed forces had taken down the head of the guerrillas of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Today, seven years later, I feel very happy that the news I bring from Colombia does not have to do with death, but with life. Today I come to tell the Assembly that the peace process with the FARC culminated not only in an agreement, but with something bigger and more important: thousands and thousands of human lives saved.

Therefore, the news today is not about death. It is about life, and we want that to be the news in the whole world. If in Colombia we were able to end an armed conflict that left hundreds of thousands dead and millions as victims and displaced persons, there is hope for the conflicts that still exist in the world. It was not easy. Ending a war, overcoming hatred and vanquishing fears involve a complex process of dialogue and compromise. However, we did it because we had the will and because we were aware of a fundamental premise: peace is a necessary condition for progress and the happiness of any society.

I want to acknowledge and thank the United Nations, because it has fully fulfilled the mission for which it was created, which is none other than to end the scourge of war. On behalf of some 50 million Colombians, I want to thank the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the Assembly.

A special mission set up by the Security Council was in charge of verifying and monitoring the FARC disarmament process and its compliance with the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities between that group and the Colombian State. Today we can say, with immense satisfaction, that its mission has been fulfilled. The ceasefire and cessation of hostilities were respected, and the FARC delivered to the United Nations more than 9,000 weapons that were stored in containers. Those weapons are being destroyed. The members of that former guerrilla group — without detriment to their responsibilities with regard to justice and to the victims — have now formed a political movement to defend their ideas and proposals in the forums of democracy.

That is what a peace process is all about: replacing violence with reasoning, exchanging bullets for votes. Never again will arms be used as a means of political pressure. Now we are faced with the challenge of

implementing what has been agreed and guaranteeing victims' rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In that regard, we can once again count on the friendly hand of the United Nations. In a few days, a second mission, authorized last week by the Security Council, will begin operations in our country. It will accompany the reintegration of guerrillas into civilian life and will help us to verify the safety of ex-combatants and the communities that have suffered from the armed conflict. And something very important: the United Nations will also verify compliance with the ceasefire and the temporary cessation of hostilities, which will begin 1 October, by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, the other guerrilla group with which we are in negotiations to achieve a complete peace.

Building peace is a long process with political, economic and social dimensions. It is a process in which, fortunately, we have already had positive results. With innovative programmes in education, health, housing and infrastructure, we are beginning to close the deep social gaps of our society.

The Economic Commission for Latin America has highlighted Colombia's progress in reducing poverty and indigence. In seven years, more than 5 million Colombians overcame poverty — that is more than a tenth of our population. We have turned health into a fundamental right, and education has been our highest budgetary priority for the past four years, above security and defence. International organizations also highlight the soundness of our economic and social indicators in the face of fluctuations in the global economy.

This is indeed a special moment for Colombia, and a special moment for the United Nations, which is successfully fulfilling, in our country, its main objective.

But this time of hope in Colombia does not prevent us from viewing with concern the difficult situations for peace and democracy in other parts of the planet. We emphatically deplore and condemn the ballistic-missile launches and the nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Those actions are a threat to international peace and security.

We are very concerned about the precarious situation in our sister and neighbour Republic of Venezuela, with which we share an immense border, a common history and human ties that do not allow us to be indifferent to its fate. Venezuela pains us. We are pained at the gradual destruction of its democracy. We are pained at the persecution of the political opposition and the systematic violation of the rights of Venezuelans. Today I repeat my call on the Secretary-General and the entire international community to support the Venezuelan people in the search for a peaceful solution that will return them to the path of progress, democracy and freedom.

We are also pained at the terrorist attacks carried out by intolerant fanatics, sowing fear and pain, and we condemn them. On that topic I would like to speak in two capacities: as President of the only country where instead of increasing weaponry we melt them to build monuments to harmony, and as the most recent Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

Beyond the differences of race, religion and thought, human beings are actually one. What happens to one happens to us all. We have to understand that beyond divisions, beyond borders, our people is called the world. Our race is called humankind. We must understand this truth if we are to respect one another and respect life.

We must fight terrorism forcefully — with military and police power, with intelligence and international cooperation. But we must also eradicate its roots, which are fear, exclusion and hatred, with the positive forces of love, compassion and respect for differences. In Colombia we are proving that it is possible: war can be overcome. Ancient enemies can speak and work together for a greater cause. If we are succeeding in Colombia, it can be done all over the world.

I cannot conclude without addressing an issue that I have highlighted before at this rostrum: the world drug problem. I have said many times that the war on drugs has not been won and is not being won, that we need new approaches and new strategies.

At the General Assembly's thirtieth special session, on the world drug problem — which met last year at the initiative of Colombia — there was progress, such as the call for States to protect human rights in their drug policies. But we still have a great deal to do. We must reach consensus on central issues, such as not criminalizing addicts and understanding drug use as a matter of public health and not criminal policy.

The war on drugs has claimed too many lives. We in Colombia have paid a very high price, perhaps

the highest of any nation, and what we are seeing is that the remedy is often worse than the disease. Let us undertake a serious and rigorous follow-up of the regulatory experiences that have been implemented in different places and learn from both their successes and their difficulties.

It is time to accept realistically that as long as there is consumption there will be supply, and that consumption will not end. It is not a simplistic matter of pointing out who is solely responsible. We all are, under the principle of the common and shared responsibility that we assumed several decades ago. It is time to talk about responsible regulation by States, to seek ways to weaken the mafias and to confront consumption with more resources for prevention, care and reduction of damage to health and to the social fabric. Colombia will continue to fight this scourge decisively. For us it has been and continues to be a matter of national security.

Peace has allowed us for the first time to initiate the process of voluntary substitution of coca crops. Those processes, along with the forced eradication we are promoting and the seizures, which have increased to unprecedented levels, will allow us to achieve results that are even more conclusive and long-term. But we must advance in this struggle with a more open mind. We have to be smarter and more innovative.

We can say much the same about climate change. Colombia, the most biodiverse country in the world for its size, is also one of the most vulnerable to climate change. That is why we have been proactive on this matter. At the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development we pushed for the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which the Assembly approved in 2015. Today we are pleased to see that those Goals are the backbone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promoted by the United Nations.

We also enthusiastically support the Paris Climate Agreement, whose goals are a national commitment and should be for all if we want to preserve our common home — the Earth. Humankind cannot close its eyes in the face of the most pressing challenge of our times.

In this, my last statement before the General Assembly, I want to offer the world — with humility and much gratitude — the example and model of peace that we are beginning to build in Colombia. And I want to reiterate our gratitude for the international community's generous support.

With the strength of love we can overcome fear. With the strength of life we can overcome the tyranny of violence and death. With the strength of unity we can make the world a decent place to live.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rahmon (*spoke in Tajik; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to join my colleagues, Heads of State and Government, in congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and to wish him every success in his noble duties. I also express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson for his continued support of Tajikistan's national and international commitments during his term as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Unprecedented rapid globalization over the past decades has contributed to the development of political and economic relationships among countries and helped bolster the integration of various regions across the world. It has also brought massive challenges to the world's people and sometimes undermines the efforts of Member States to ensure a safe, fair and secure life for their people. In this context, the United Nations, as a universal institution, should continue to carry out its noble mission of coordinating the efforts of Member States to strengthen countries' resilience in responding to modern threats and challenges.

It is impossible to address the new challenges facing the international community without strengthening and reforming the entire United Nation system. Comprehensive and inclusive reform of the United Nations must contribute to increasing and strengthening its capacity to respond to developments around the world in a timely manner and to deal with today's threats and risks. United Nations reform should be implemented in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We support the inclusive and equal representation of the interests of developing countries in the Security Council reform process.

We are witnessing today many tragic and horrific events taking place across the globe that undermine the international community's commitment to attaining comprehensive sustainable development. The spread of terrorism and extremism, religious armed conflicts, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking pose serious challenges to the security of our countries.

As terrorist and extremist groups and movements flourish in many hot spots throughout the world, threatening people's security by using certain corners of the world as safe havens, I wish to reiterate that the horror and brutal acts of these forces have absolutely no connection with the holy religion of Islam. On the contrary, they run counter to the moral teachings and do not reflect the tolerance and values of Islam. In order to confront these threats, all Member States must make every effort, in accordance with international law, and avoid double standards.

The Government of Tajikistan continues to take concrete steps to address threats and challenges and to ensure lasting peace and overall stability in the country, in cooperation with its partners and international organizations, in particular the relevant United Nations agencies. The implementation of the second phase of our National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism 2016-2020 is one effective instrument we use to fulfil our commitments. I should emphasize that these efforts are aimed at supporting the United Nations central coordinating role in assisting countries in post-conflict rehabilitation processes.

The success of our joint actions to prevent and resolve conflict and to seek the peaceful settlement of disputes will depend first and foremost on how effectively we use preventive diplomacy and mediation. Peace and stability can ensure sustainable, inclusive cooperation aimed at resolving the conflict in North Korea. Peace and stability can ensure sustainable social and economic development and a more peaceful life, and create conditions conducive to a strong civil society and to respect for and the protection of human rights in all countries, facilitating the prosperity of Member States.

We Tajiks are well aware of the importance of peace and the need to defend it, since our people have experienced many hardships and suffered through a civil war in the early days of its independence. As a result of the domestic conflict imposed upon them, thousands of our nationals lost their lives. Only through peace and stability have we been able to achieve sustainable economic development, reduce poverty and improve our people's well-being, promote cooperation with different countries and goodwill among nations throughout the world, and take the measures necessary to ensure regional integration.

We cannot afford to remain silent in the face of the military, political, social and economic situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. The rapidly growing activity of violent terrorist groups in the country has become a source of serious concern for us. Given the current situation in that country, it is high time to take strong measures to coordinate counter-terrorism efforts and tackle drug production and trafficking in narcotics.

Tajikistan supports Afghanistan's comprehensive conflict resolution strategy. The Government and the people of Afghanistan need timely support and targeted assistance, especially during the current transition period. Tajikistan's involvement in the process of regional integration through enhanced economic and trade relations with that country could be an important element in helping the country move forward towards peace and stability. We call on the international community to stand with and contribute to helping Afghanistan restore its ailing social and economic life and to develop its transport and communication infrastructure.

Tajikistan, which has 1,400 kilometres of border with Afghanistan, stands ready and committed to contribute to these noble objectives. Transport and road links between our countries and the implementation of the power-transmission lines projects, including the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), as well as the training and professional development of experts in different areas,

are among the projects that we are carrying out with that country.

Fighting drug trafficking, which is one of the main sources of funding of international terrorism, calls for the joint effort and strong will of the international community to help the country get rid of this evil. Tajikistan has established cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, regional organizations and partner countries at the bilateral level. We are currently successfully implementing our National Strategy on Combating Illicit Drugs 2013-2020.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the international community was a key milestone in our joint work to advance sustainable development and involve all sectors of society in the process. Over the past few years, Tajikistan has made great strides towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of my country, in close and effective cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, has developed and adopted the Mid-Term Development Strategy 2020 and the National Development Strategy 2016-2030. These strategies have been developed in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we believe that their timely and effective implementation will contribute to achieving the Agenda.

Tajikistan was among 43 countries that presented their voluntary national review in July at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in New York. To achieve the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary to help the least developed countries and developing countries, particularly by providing financial support and cutting-edge technologies, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is worth mentioning that the geographical situation of landlocked developing countries and their lack of access to sea ports are serious obstacles to honouring their commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries in these circumstances need much more assistance from developed countries and international financial institutions in their efforts to develop infrastructure, improve transport systems and simplify trade policies and regional integration. The specialized institutions and agencies of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Council, can and should have an important role in this regard.

We believe that the more attention we give to economic, social and environmental issues, the better we can contribute to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. That would also help countries to cope with their social challenges and improve the livelihood and living standards of their people by providing jobs.

We, the representatives of the international community, adopted the Paris Agreement on Climate Change two years ago. The goals enshrined in that critical document determine the major obligations and efforts of the international community in reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, adaptation to climate change and transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Climate change accelerates the melting of glaciers, which affects the rise of the water level in rivers and negatively affects certain sectors of the national economy. With 93 per cent of its territory surrounded by mountains, Tajikistan, owing to its geographical location, faces the devastating consequences of climate change and natural disasters. Every year, the country suffers from natural disasters, including those related to water. Tajikistan spends hundreds of millions of dollars to tackle and eliminate the consequences of natural disasters.

Over the past 30 years, Tajikistan has lost more than 1,000 of its 13,000 glaciers due to melting as a result of climate change and temperature rise. This comes at a time when the industrial capability of Tajikistan, which is the main source of its carbon dioxide emissions, is not especially large. Ninety-eight per cent of the country's energy is produced by hydroelectric power stations, generating environmentally friendly energy. Over 60 per cent of Central Asian water resources are currently formed in Tajikistan. It is obvious that the accelerated melting of glaciers adversely affects water levels in the region.

In this regard, the time has come for us to turn our words into actions and demonstrate our resolve to implement the goals of the Paris Agreement. In our view, one way to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement is to adhere to the green economy recommmendations and promote the comprehensive use of renewable energy sources. In this context, we express our full support of the international Sustainable Energy for All initiative and the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024. It is important for the international

community to make vigorous efforts to achieve these goals.

Tajikistan is strongly committed to maintaining its contribution to implementing the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda. It is with great pleasure that I note that, in December 2016, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 71/222, entitled "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028". We believe that the implementation of the new Decade at the national, regional and international levels will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals related to water and help to preserve that invaluable resource for generations to come.

This morning we conducted a high-level side event entitled "Towards Implementation of the International Decade of Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028", at which participants exchanged views on ways and means to implement the new international Decade and Sustainable Development Goal 6. Furthermore, in order to review and deliberate on proposals by development partners and with a view to adopting a road map for the Decade, we intend to organize, on 22 March 2018, World Water Day, a special event in New York to celebrate the launch of the international Decade and to host a high-level international conference on water for sustainable development in Dushanbe next June. We strongly believe that the States Members of the United Nations, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, think-tank associations, women and youth will stand together and work to achieve the Decade's goals and objectives for the sake of the lives of people around the globe and to ensure a better future for coming generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lungu: Let me join previous speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also wish to extend Zambia's sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his able leadership during the seventy-first session.

May I also convey my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres and congratulate him on his appointment as the ninth Secretary-General. I am confident that the Secretary-General will build upon the strong foundation that was laid by his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to whom I wish to pay glowing tribute for the manner in which he steered the Organization during his tenure of office.

The theme for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", provides us with an opportunity to evaluate the existing multilateral approaches to address the challenges affecting our peoples. They include threats to socioeconomic development and international peace and security. There is a need, therefore, to develop innovative approaches and responses to the challenges, which include terrorism, climate change, nuclear weapons and HIV/AIDS, among many others. In today's globalized and interdependent world, no country, however wealthy or powerful, can resolve all those challenges single-handedly. Common solutions are therefore required through a strong United Nations.

This year's session is taking place against a backdrop of the adverse effects of climate change, which have spared no one nation, developed or underdeveloped. Our efforts to raise the standard of living for the world's poor people in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals are being frustrated by the effects of climate change. We have witnessed the devastating effects of climate change on our environment. Recently, there have been many hurricanes in the Caribbean. I remember a time when forests were within a child's walking distance, in particular in Africa, and were

teeming with a profusion of flora and fauna. That is no longer the case. Unfortunately, a myriad of species of flora and fauna have become extinct in a very short time. We have also continued to witness disasters such as droughts, wildfires, flooding and landslides; if not extreme levels of rain, it is the lack of it.

As the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change draws near, Zambia is expectant that the Conference will, among other things, establish mechanisms for the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Furthermore, we call on all stakeholders to ensure that the Green Climate Fund is adequately funded in order to help deliver the necessary interventions globally. As a developing country, Zambia needs assistance to enhance its capacity in key adaptive areas, such as scientific research, early warning and rapid response in order to address the adverse effects of climate change. Accordingly, Zambia also calls for the transfer of appropriate technologies to help cope with the negative impact of climate change.

Over the past year, Zambia has made significant developmental efforts and is determined to foster an all-inclusive development paradigm, based on the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Only a few months ago, on 21 June, I had the honour to launch the seventh National Development Plan, which is Zambia's development blueprint for the five-year period from 2017 to 2021. Its theme is "Accelerating development efforts towards the attainment of the National Vision 2030, without leaving anyone behind". The plan seeks to improve productivity in agriculture, create job opportunities in other sectors, such as manufacturing, and particular attention will be given to lifting standards of living in rural areas, where a new focus on agro-value addition is being implemented. Through that plan, Zambia aims to reduce poverty to minimal levels.

In keeping with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, my Government is determined to ensure the effective mobilization and use of all sources of finance, whether mobilized locally or through our international cooperation partners, for the benefit of the average person in Zambia — as long as it is not illicit financing.

Peace, security and the rule of law continue to be the basis for the meaningful development of any society. In keeping with that understanding, my Government has continued to work in solidarity with nations that are undertaking the necessary actions to enhance their democracies. Through its membership in the African Union Peace and Security Council, Zambia has also continued to provide support for those still afflicted by conflict. My Government also looks forward to serving the Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation of the Southern African Development Community from 2017 to 2020, following our recent election to the Organ. I would like to assure the Assembly that my Government will use its membership in these two bodies to foster peace globally, especially in Africa.

We wish to recognize the vision and experience of the various regional and international bodies that complement the United Nations agenda. As a member State, we note the role of the Commonwealth of Nations in various subjects such as gender and youth matters, climate change, the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance and socioeconomic development. In my country, the Commonwealth Secretariat has played an important role in providing technical support during and after the previously held elections, and this we cannot ignore.

Zambia has also continued to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations with a sense of duty to those persons who have found their security under threat for various reasons. In this regard, the United Nations should not shirk its noble duty to these vulnerable persons; it should redouble its efforts to bring about a more peaceful world.

The United Nations commitment should not be limited to preventing conflict, but should go further in seeking to protect victims of conflict, including displaced persons. There is a need for all of us to cooperate in providing for a environment conducive to respect for their human rights, social development and well-being. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that in June this year, in Zambia, I assented to Zambia's Refugees Act of 2017, which further speaks to this noble duty and replaces the previous law, which did not go far enough to ensure an environment conducive to the promotion of human rights for the displaced in the region who happen to be hosted by our country, Zambia.

My Government attaches great importance to the needs and welfare of all, with a particular focus on women, children and youth. Zambia has therefore

continued to make tremendous strides in its campaign to end child marriage. The current prevalence rate stands at 31.2 per cent, which represents a 10.8 per cent reduction from the 42 per cent rate at the time the campaign was launched. We have also continued to engage traditional leaders in reforming traditions and customs that allow child marriage. Currently, we are in the process of harmonizing statutory and customary law on marriage to completely prohibit and eradicate child marriage in the country. Going forward, we are also repealing a number of discriminatory and outdated statutes related to children with a view to devising a Children's Code to incorporate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into our domestic law.

As the designated 2017 African Union champion for ending child marriage, I am delighted to inform the Assembly that a campaign to that end has been launched in 20 of the 30 targeted countries in Africa with the highest prevalence rates of child marriage. These programmes are essential to enhancing advocacy against child marriage at the national level. The campaign is growing from strength to strength. However, much more needs to be done. We therefore call on all partners to join their efforts, and, together, let us raise our voices to protect our children and young people. The campaign will continue to gain momentum and reach out to member States to accelerate an end to this harmful practice.

Undoubtedly, the United Nations remains the only multilateral institution capable of addressing the challenges of our "one world". The world looks to the Organization to encourage dialogue on global challenges in an inclusive manner. This is the only practical way to ensure meaningful and effective international cooperation. There is, however, a need to reform the United Nations.

Zambia believes that the United Nations reforms that have been launched will be incomplete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. It is our hope that reforms will make the Security Council more representative, democratic and accountable to all States Members of the United Nations, irrespective of status. This is essential if its decisions are to be accepted by the entire international community. Given that Africa constitutes the second largest bloc of United Nations membership, proposals to reform the Security Council should heed the African continent's call set forth in the Ezulwini Consensus.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's commitment to cooperate with the international community in addressing the numerous problems affecting our people, including ending poverty. We should not miss the opportunity to do what we can to make the world a better place for all of us to live.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: The topic of this year's debate invites us to focus on people and our responsibility to ensure their peaceful and sustainable future. However, in today's world, such a peaceful future is threatened as never before. Authoritarian regimes continue to kill with impunity, extremist ideologies treat innocent people with unspeakable cruelty, and thousands die after leaving their homes in search for a better and more peaceful life.

The world's attention is now focused on North Korea and in some other regions, but the same kinds of blackmail, bullying and aggression that we see there are also being used by Russia in Ukraine and along NATO's eastern border. As we speak, approximately 100,000 Russian troops are engaged in Exercise Zapad 2017 — offensive military exercises on the borders of Baltic States, Poland and even in the Arctic. The Kremlin is rehearsing aggressive scenarios against its neighbours, training its army to attack the West. The exercise is also part of information warfare that aims to spread uncertainty and fear. It is even more disturbing

that the Zapad 2017 exercise is just one symptom of the Kremlin's inability to finally end its hatred towards the West.

Despite Russia's special responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council to protect international peace, it violated the Charter of the United Nations by attacking Georgia, illegally annexing Crimea and directly participating in the war in the east of Ukraine. The Kremlin's arsenal does not stop at conventional weapons. Russia continues to meddle in elections and conduct cyberattacks, and it uses its sputniks to spread fake news and destabilizing propaganda. Energy blackmail has long been Russia's weapon of choice. For example, in Belarus, just 40 kilometres from Lithuania's capital, it is building the unsafe Astravyets nuclear power plant as a geopolitical weapon that fails to comply with basic international nuclear standards.

Abuses and indifference to basic international norms by regimes across the world are not unrelated. Too often they are a result of our collective failure to condemn or properly react to violations. Time and time again we lack the courage to enforce the rules that we ourselves have established. We draw red lines in the sand and then pretend they do not exist. That has to change. Bullies are aggressive precisely because they are weak and insecure, which is why we must stop being passive observers and start calling things by their real names. Aggression can never make anyone stronger. It can never earn anyone a single drop of respect. The only thing that aggression will bring about is contempt, shame and condemnation.

The international community has to take a share of responsibility. We cannot let fear win by closing our eyes to violators, because that will only encourage them to go further. We must learn to read the warning signs, because abuse of human rights, nationalist rhetoric and the suppression of free speech explode into violence if ignored.

Finally, we must change the United Nations. This unique universal body was created to save the world from wars and instability. So far it has failed to fulfil that purpose. We now face a choice — we either give the Organization the voice to rise up against the abuse, or we render it irrelevant.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We wish him every success in his mandate. I also wish to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his valuable efforts in managing the affairs of the General Assembly during the seventy-first session. I also take this opportunity to commend the efforts of His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

Maintaining regional and international peace and security is a priority in the foreign policy of the State of Qatar, which bases its principles and objectives on the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. It calls for constructive cooperation among States, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as good-neighbourliness and the promotion of peaceful coexistence, while pursuing peaceful means to settle disputes.

The issue of settling disputes by peaceful means is still being addressed as an episodic and non-binding proposal. Perhaps the time has come to impose dialogue and negotiation as a basis for resolving disputes by concluding an international convention on settling disputes between States by peaceful means.

In that context, and after major events such as the Second World War, Rwanda and Burundi and the Balkan conflicts in the past century, the danger of the impunity of perpetrators of crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide has returned to threaten humankind by

becoming the rule rather than the exception, because international legitimacy is subjected to political pressure, the interests of parties and the dictation of force on the ground, which maintain that the law of force is able to supersede the force of law.

In our view, major Powers should not range between two extremes: the direct occupation of countries to impose the occupier's will and policy, or standing idly by as an observer who does nothing with regard to wars of genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated by fascist, despotic regimes, or to continuous repression by an occupying State of the people under occupation.

Lately there has been a growing sense that people under repression face their fate alone, as if the international arena were governed by the law of the jungle and the countries under threat had to stand on their own through help from their alliances and relations, in the absence of a system to implement the provisions of international law and binding conventions and charters.

We commend the President for the theme chosen for this session, that is, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". In that context, I call upon the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the international community to assume their legal and moral responsibility and take the measures necessary to stop the violence against the Rohingya minority, provide them with protection, repatriate the displaced to their homeland, prevent sectarian or ethnic discrimination against them and ensure that they have their full legitimate rights as full-fledged citizens. We urge all States to provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya.

Every time I stand here, I speak in favour of constructive international cooperation, just peace and the rights of peoples under occupation, those who are subjected to crimes against humanity and those who are under siege. This time I stand here while my country and my people are subjected to a continuing and unjust blockade, imposed since 5 June by our neighbouring countries. The blockade involves all aspects of life, including intervention by those countries to sever family ties. At the moment Qatar is successfully managing its life — its economy, development plans and its outreach to the wider world — thanks to sea and air routes that those countries do not control.

The blockade was imposed abruptly and without warning, prompting Qataris to consider it as a kind of betrayal. It seems that those who planned and implemented it had envisaged that their action would cause a shocking and direct impact that would bring the State of Qatar to its knees and cause it to capitulate to a total guardianship imposed upon it.

What is worse, those who schemed for the blockade found it necessary to rely on fabricated quotes attributed to me, which they posted on the Qatar News Agency website after hacking it. The controlled media of those countries were ready to launch an all-out campaign of incitement, prepared in advance, in which all values, morals and norms were breached, while a torrent of lies infringed upon the truth. Funds are still being spent unsparingly on the machine faking news and disseminating fabrications in the hope of fooling people by distorting the truth with plain lies.

Despite the exposure of the hacking and falsification of quotes by the Amir of a sovereign State, the blockading countries did not back down or apologize for lying, but rather intensified their campaign, in the hope that the blockade would cause a cumulative effect on the economy and the society of my country, after it failed to have any direct impact. The perpetrators of the hacking and the falsified quotes have committed an assault against a sovereign State. The crime was deliberately committed for political aims and was followed by a list of political declarations, which contravene sovereignty. They caused worldwide astonishment.

This disgraceful act has once again raised international questions about digital security, cybercrime and electronic piracy. It has also revealed the anxiety in many public and official circles around the world over the absence of clear-cut international legislation and institutions to govern this dangerous and vital field, or to punish the perpetrators of transnational crimes. It is high time to take steps in this regard. We are ready to mobilize our potential to serve in such a joint effort.

The countries that imposed the unjust blockade on Qatar have intervened in the internal affairs of the State by putting pressure on the citizens through food, medicine and family ties, with a view to forcing them to change their political affiliation so as to destabilize a sovereign country. Is this not one of the definitions of terrorism?

This illegal blockade was not confined to the economic field and to breaching the World Trade Organization agreement, but went beyond that to violate human rights conventions by arbitrary measures that have caused social and religious harm to thousands of citizens and residents of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council by violating the basic human rights to work, education and the freedom of movement and the right to private property.

However, things did not stop at that point, as the blockading countries went on to persecute their own citizens on their own territories and to impose penalties of imprisonment and fines on them for the mere expression of their sympathy with the State of Qatar, even on social media. That was unprecedented, and it violates the human rights conventions and agreements that guarantee the right to the freedom of opinion and expression.

There are countries that not only attack a neighbouring country so as to dictate its foreign policy and media policy, but also believe that having a lot of money qualifies them to put pressure on other countries and blackmail them to participate in their aggression, while they are supposed to be held accountable internationally for what they have committed.

The countries that imposed the blockade on the State of Qatar are interfering in the internal affairs of many countries and accuse all those who oppose them, domestically or abroad, of terrorism. Thus they are harming the war on terror, while at the same time opposing reform and supporting the tyrannical regimes in our region, in whose prisons terrorists are born.

We were not alone in being taken by surprise by the imposition of the blockade, as many countries whose leaders have questioned its motives and reasons were also surprised. The blockading countries have promised all those who asked them about the reasons for the blockade to provide them with evidence of their absurd anti-Qatar allegations and fabrications, which keep changing according to the identity of the person being asked. Everyone is still waiting for evidence, which has not arrived and will not arrive — because it does not exist. On the contrary, those allegations contradict the considerable evidence about Qatar's contribution to the fight against terrorism, which is recognized by the entire international community.

The State of Qatar has fought terrorism, and the entire international community bears witness to that. It is still fighting terrorism and will continue to do so. It stands in the camp of those who are fighting by security means and believes that it is necessary to fight terrorism ideologically as well. Qatar goes beyond that to participate in drying up its sources by providing education to 7 million children around the world, so that they do not fall prey to ignorance and radical ideas.

We have refused to yield to dictation by pressure and blockade, and our people will not be satisfied with anything less. At the same time, we have taken an open attitude towards dialogue without dictation and have expressed our readiness to resolve differences through compromises based on common undertakings. Resolving conflicts by peaceful means is one of the priorities of our foreign policy. I renew here the call for an unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect for sovereignty. I highly value the sincere and appreciated mediation that the State of Qatar has supported since the beginning of the crisis, which was initiated by my brother, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the sisterly State of Kuwait. I also thank all the countries that have supported this mediation.

Allow me on this occasion to express here my pride in my Qatari people, along with the multinational and multicultural residents of Qatar. The people have withstood the conditions of siege, rejected dictation with resolve and pride, insisted on the independence of Qatar's sovereign decision and strengthened its unity and solidarity, while maintaining their refined manners and their progress despite the fierceness of the campaign launched against them and their country.

I reiterate my thanks to the sisterly and friendly countries that recognize the significance of respecting the sovereignty of States and the rule of international law, while also appreciating their stance of remaining supportive of the Qatari people during this crisis.

Terrorism and extremism are among the most serious challenges facing the world. Countering them requires us all to carry out concerted action against terrorist organizations and their extremist ideology, in order to maintain security for humankind and stability for the world. Governments worldwide have no choice but to cooperate in dealing with the threat of terrorism as a security issue, but halting the spread of terrorism and extremism can be achieved by addressing its social, political and cultural root causes. We must also

be careful not to use the fight against terrorism as an umbrella to cover reprisals or the shelling of civilians.

The fight against terrorism and extremism was and will continue to be a top priority. That is affirmed by the effective participation of the State of Qatar in regional and international efforts to implement the measures included in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted in 2006, and all the Security Council resolutions and measures related to countering terrorism and its financing.

We have also participated in international coalitions and regional organizations and nurtured bilateral relations with the United States of America and many countries of the world. The State of Qatar will continue its regional and international efforts in this regard and will develop them further.

While reaffirming our condemnation of all forms of extremism and terrorism, we reject the tackling of this phenomenon using double standards, according to the identity of the perpetrators, or linking terrorism with a particular religion, race, civilization, culture or society.

The issues facing the Middle East continue to pose the greatest threat to international peace and security due to the vital importance of that region to the world. Israel still stands in the way of achieving a lasting, just and comprehensive peace and rejects the Arab Peace Initiative. The Israeli Government maintains its intransigent approach and strategy to create facts on the ground through expanding settlement construction in the occupied territories, Judaizing Jerusalem and restricting the performance of religious rituals in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is a serious, provocative act. It also continues to impose its blockade on the Gaza Strip.

The international community must give high priority to the resumption of peace negotiations on the basis of ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories within a specified time frame, and to reaching a just, comprehensive and vital settlement, in accordance with the two-State solution, agreed upon by the international community and based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. A settlement will be achieved only through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital. I renew my appeal to my Palestinian brothers to achieve national reconciliation, consolidate their positions and speak with one voice when confronting the dangers and challenges facing the Palestinian question on the future of the Palestinian people.

The international community is unable to find a solution to the Syrian crisis despite its consequences and serious repercussions for the region and the world. Political efforts continue to falter due to conflicting international and regional interests, which serve to protect those against whom we are supposed to stand united. The international community has relinquished its legal and moral responsibilities, including the implementation of its decisions, and has succumbed to the logic of force. What is required is serious work to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis in a way that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people to justice, dignity and freedom, and to maintain the unity and sovereignty of Syria, in accordance with the decisions of the Geneva I Conference on Syria. Qatar will spare no effort in providing support and assistance to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of our Syrian brothers and to implement our humanitarian pledges within the framework of the United Nations.

The international community has given up the task of protecting civilians. Will it also hesitate to find war criminals accountable? Their impunity will have dire consequences for the situation in Syria and the region, and would affect the behaviour of future dictatorships towards their peoples in the absence of any deterrent.

Turning to the Libyan question, Libya's national consensus, which would preserve its unity, sovereignty and social fabric and restore its stability, could be achieved by means of combining domestic and international efforts. We must all intensify our efforts and support the Government of National Accord, which has been established with the support of the United Nations, in its effort to restore stability and to counter terrorism and its grave consequences. The State of Qatar has supported international mediation efforts and will support them in future in order to meet the aspirations of the Libyan people.

Concerning the fraternal country of Iraq, we support the efforts of the Iraqi Government to achieve security, stability and the unity of the territory and people of Iraq. We commend the achievements of the Iraqi people in their fight against terrorism. We reaffirm our support to promote their victory by helping the people of Iraq to realize their aspirations for equality among all its citizens and to restore Iraq's role at the regional and international levels.

Concerning Yemen, we affirm the importance of maintaining Yemen's unity, security and stability and ending the state of infighting and war, while adopting dialogue, a political solution and national reconciliation as a basis for ending this crisis and implementing Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). We call on the international community to facilitate the access of humanitarian assistance to various Yemeni regions. The State of Qatar supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen to end the crisis and realize the aspirations of the brotherly Yemeni people to attain unity, security and stability.

In order to achieve security and stability in the Gulf region, we reiterate the call that we have made before from this rostrum for a constructive dialogue between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Iran on the basis of common interests, the principle of good-neighbourliness, respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

In the framework of international efforts to address humanitarian crises, the State of Qatar continues to contribute to the international response to the growing humanitarian needs of the world at large. We have increased our financial contributions to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) so as to enable the Organization to implement its programmes and provide humanitarian relief to those in need worldwide.

The State of Qatar ranks third on the list of major donors to OCHA in 2017. We continue to provide support to countries facing challenges in implementing their development plans. It is worth mentioning here that the State of Qatar ranked first in the Arab world and 33rd in the world in the field of human development. This proves the effectiveness of our humanitarian and development policy. We look forward to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which we all have committed to achieve.

In conclusion, we reiterate that the State of Qatar will spare no effort in strengthening the role of the United Nations and and efforts to achieve what the international community seeks, bringing peace and security and promoting human rights and advancing development. Qatar will remain, as is always the case, a safe haven for the oppressed, and we will continue its mediation efforts to find just solutions in conflict zones.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Erdoğan (*spoke in Turkish, interpretation provided by the delegation*): I greet the General Assembly with respect on behalf of myself and my country.

I would like to thank Mr. Peter Thomson for his successful work over the past year as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, who has assumed the presidency of the General Assembly.

I hope that this year's session of the General Assembly, which has been convened under the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", will bring well-being to all of the world's peoples.

Unfortunately, global peace and stability have regressed further since our meeting in the Hall last year. We continue to see the ugly face of terror and war in different corners of the world. Terrorists, who are fuelled by an environment of conflict, continue their acts, spreading terror across different regions. We are anxiously observing the violent actions of radical currents converging on xenophobia, cultural racism and animosity against Islam.

The most effective way of reversing this negative outlook would be to engage in sincere cooperation in the Hall. We need to develop a new perspective to promote world peace. No crisis or threat can possibly

be resolved by allowing it to play out on its own. We all have to shoulder responsibility for a safer and more prosperous world. It is in that understanding that Turkey is pursuing an enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy.

The Syrian conflict has entered its seventh year. This conflict has created deep wounds in the country, the region and throughout the world. In Syria, an entire civilization is being annihilated, together with civilians and innocent children. Terrorism, which is destroying the country and is fuelled by instability and oppression, is spreading like a cancer across borders. The Syrian people who took action demanding democracy, freedom, justice and a bright future were, unfortunately, abandoned by the international community.

Turkey cannot remain indifferent to the tragedy of these people, whom we see as our brothers and sisters regardless of their origin or creed and to whom we are connected by deep historical ties. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in the spring of 2011, we have exerted all kinds of humanitarian and political efforts to solve the problem and we will continue to do so. We are currently hosting more than 3 million Syrians and over 200,000 Iraqis in our country. Together with Russia and Iran, we have launched the Astana meetings, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, in order to establish a permanent ceasefire and peace in the country.

Following our initiatives, the Geneva process, which has long been blocked, has been revived. We are putting into practice a new plan to ensure the security of the Idlib region in Syria within the framework of the agreement reached in Astana. Turkey would support any step towards the construction of a stable and prosperous Syria, based on the territorial integrity of the country and on respect for the democratic demands of its people.

We have taken and will continue to take all kinds of measures for those who came to our country with the outbreak of the Syrian crisis and to stem the influx of refugees into Europe. We meet all the needs of these people, from shelter to food and clothing and from health care to education, at standards that are appreciated by all those who visit our country. However, I would like to underscore that we have not received sufficient support from the international community, especially from the European Union, for our efforts. The expenditures of our public institutions, civil-society organizations and our people in order to meet the needs of those living in the camps and cities in Turkey have exceeded $30 billion. In response, the European Union has sent only €820 million out of the €3 billion + €3 billion that it promised. The total assistance from the international community through the United Nations remains around $520 million. I should point out that no share of the assistance intended for the Syrians goes into our own budget; it is all delivered to those in need by the relief agencies through the relevant institutions of the United Nations.

Before the whole world, I hereby call on the countries and international organizations that have placed the entire burden of the 3.2 million people on Turkey's shoulders to fulfil the promises they made. In fact, Turkey is a country that carries out humanitarian aid and development assistance activities around the world. Not only do we welcome those who come to our country, but through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish Disaster and Management Authority and the Turkish Red Crescent and various civil-society organizations we rush to the help of all who are suffering and under oppression, regardless of which part of the world they may be in. For example, through its official institutions and civil-society organizations, Turkey has spent $1 billion for the reconstruction of Somalia so far. The work we carry out and the results we have achieved in Somalia could indeed provide an example for similar efforts.

According to confirmed statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with $6 billion in humanitarian and development aid in 2016, Turkey ranked as the world's second-largest donor and top contributor in terms of gross national product. Yet, Turkey is the seventeenth-largest economy in the world. Having spent 0.8 per cent of its national income on humanitarian assistance, Turkey is one of the six countries that could meet the United Nations target.

Therefore, Turkey is working diligently to achieve a sustainable world, which is the theme of this session of the General Assembly. We will continue in the coming days with the same consideration in mind.

Turkey is engaged in an intense fight against the bloody terrorist organizations of the region, such as Da'esh and the Kurdish Workers' Party, which are nourished by the instability in Syria and Iraq. In addition, our fight against the Fethullah Terrorist Organization, which attempted to change the legitimate

and democratic regime of Turkey by a bloody coup, is also ongoing. We have recovered 243 residential areas and a tract of land larger than 2,000 kilometres thanks to Operation Euphrates Shield, initiated in Syria following the attacks by Da'esh on our borders. We neutralized almost 3,000 Da'esh militants during that operation. Around 100,000 Syrians returned to and resettled in the region we cleared of terrorists. Operation Euphrates Shield is the single greatest accomplishment against Da'esh since its occupation of the region.

I must highlight the following fact before the Assembly. Most of the groups and forces claiming to be fighting Da'esh in the region in fact have no such goal. These groups and forces are using Da'esh as a pretext to realize their own agendas.

The efforts of the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat-People's Protection Units to change the demographic structure of the regions it has captured, to seize the property of the people and to kill or exile those who stand against it constitute a crime against humanity.

If the fight against Da'esh is not waged on a legitimate basis, the world will certainly face the threat of new, Da'esh-like entities.

Similar approaches exist in Iraq as well. Iraq also requires that compromises be reached on the basis of territorial integrity and the realization of the ideal of building a common future. Steps such as demands for independence that can cause fresh crises and conflicts in the region must be avoided. We hereby call on the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government to abort the initiative that it has launched in that direction. Ignoring the clear and determined stance of Turkey on this issue could lead to a process that would deprive the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government of even the opportunities they currently enjoy. We all should work on building tranquillity, peace, security and stability in the region instead of sparking new conflicts.

In addition to Syria and Iraq, we are also closely following regions in Libya and in Yemen where terrorist organizations are trying to establish their influence. The international community's support for the legitimate Government of Libya will contribute significantly to the stability of the country. It should be kept in mind that if the mistakes made in Syria and Iraq were to be repeated in Libya, that would expose the entire world, particularly Europe, to much greater threats.

Another issue on which Turkey places special emphasis is the immediate resolution of the conflict that has erupted in the Gulf region. We believe that the sanctions that are negatively affecting the living conditions of the Qatari people should be lifted forthwith. We support the mediation efforts of the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to resolve the crisis. Our hope is that these efforts will yield positive results. We also hope that Saudi Arabia, which we see as the elder brother of the Gulf region, will show a sincere will to resolve this issue.

Another important problem is the issue of Palestine, which we consider to be the gaping wound of the world, and, by extension, the preservation of the historical status of Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, that is, the Temple Mount. The crisis in Al-Haram Al-Sharif in July demonstrated the sensitivity of the issue. The continuation of the peace process can be possible only on the condition that Israel immediately stop its illegal settlement activities and take steps towards a two-State solution.

In this context, I call on the international community to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in their struggle for an independent and geographically unified Palestinian State.

Despite the current absence of conflict there, the Balkans is another geographical location of potential crisis that still faces serious challenges. For this reason, we attach great importance to the integration of the Balkan countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Turkey will continue to do its part to ensure that peace, stability and well-being prevail in this exceptional part of the world.

The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia is the key to regional stability in the southern Caucasus. Therefore, we need to work harder towards the resolution of the conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We should never forget that each crisis we ignore today has the potential to spark a regional or even global crisis tomorrow. In this context, I would also like to underline that we are against nuclear weapons of all kinds, which have increasingly come to occupy the world agenda in recent days. It is clear that we cannot overcome these problems unless we completely free the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons.

We are also saddened by the fact that the comprehensive negotiation process begun in 2008 has ended owing to the incomprehensible stance of the Greek Cypriots. We will do our best to ensure that the natural resources discovered in the eastern Mediterranean in recent years serve to further the peace, stability and welfare of the region. We are ready to consider proposals for a solution that respects the rights of Turkish Cypriots.

Our world, already struggling with all of these global and regional problems, was shocked once again by the sad news that we received from Myanmar a few weeks ago. The Muslim community in the Rakhine region of Myanmar is being subjected to what almost amounts to ethnic cleansing, with provocative terrorist acts used as a pretext. The villages of the Rohingya Muslims, who have already been living in extreme poverty and misery, deprived of their citizenship rights, are being burned as hundreds of thousands of people are forced to migrate from the region and the country.

The camps in Bangladesh to which the people migrating from the region are being diverted are not in a position to meet even their minimum humanitarian needs. As is the case in Syria, the international community has not given a good account of itself regarding the humanitarian plight of the Rohingya Muslims. If the tragedy in Myanmar is not stopped, the history of humankind will be marred by yet another dark stain. What is most important is to ensure that the Rohingya people who have taken refuge outside their country, especially in Bangladesh, are able to live in safety and peace and in conditions of well-being on their own lands, where they have lived for centuries. Turkey is endeavouring to help resolve this crisis as well.

Recently, on the occasion of a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), we held a special session on that issue in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, with the participating countries. My wife, my son and our Ministers who visited the camps in Bangladesh immediately after the latest crisis personally witnessed the humanitarian plight of the people there. Clothing, food and other humanitarian aid was provided, and we are now looking at the second phase of such aid. We will be holding a meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Rohingya Muslims here at the United Nations this afternoon. As I mentioned, my wife, my son, our Ministers and some Turkish non-governmental organizations visited the area. The Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish official aid organization, is also in the region; it is the only organization carrying out assistance activities.

Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent and other non-governmental organizations are continuing to deliver humanitarian aid to the Rakhine Muslims in Myanmar. If the countries concerned provide the necessary means, we would like to continue our assistance activities in a more comprehensive way. I discussed these issues with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency António Guterres, and we are now preparing to take further steps.

All these developments and humanitarian tragedies confirm the relevance of our appeal for the restructuring of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, as symbolized by our motto, "The world is bigger than five". Gathered here under this roof, we must understand that it is high time to reform the Security Council. Under this roof, we represent the entire world, but if we cannot display the will to prevent murders carried out by terrorist organizations or prevent humanitarian crises, then everyone will find ways to help themselves.

If that understanding prevails, then our world will be dragged into a new maelstorm of chaos and cruelty. If Western countries do not prevent tendencies such as xenophobia, racism and animosity against Islam, if the countries in the crisis-ridden regions of the world do not demonstrate decisive will to fight terrorist organizations and poverty, and if all of us do not cooperate with one another on all of those fronts, then how can we possibly reach our ideals of peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet?

We support the work done to that end by the Secretary-General, with whom we cooperated closely during his tenure as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is in nobody's interest to insist on the continuation of this distorted system, which no longer has the capacity to take concrete steps towards the good of humankind under its current form.

We want the Security Council to have a democratic, transparent, fair and effective structure. We propose that the Security Council consist of 20 members with the same rights and competencies — each member serving for two years and half replaced every year. In that way, all countries would have a say in that important organ when it was their turn. It is imperative that we transform the United Nations, because the world is changing. We

are living in a different world than the one where the United Nations was established after the Second World War. We must talk about a United Nations administered by representatives of the entire world as the embodiment of humankind's common conscience.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me remind the Assembly that, regardless of the colour of our faces and eyes, our tears are the same. I urge the Assembly take action immediately to stop the tears flowing in different parts of the world. I hope that the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly will contribute to our efforts to that end. With those thoughts, I salute with amity and respect all countries and peoples represented under this roof, at this joint parliament of humankind. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my country, I extend my greetings to the Assembly. God bless the Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Danon (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 8

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): We are in the midst of a great revolution — a revolution in Israel's standing among the nations. It is happening because so many countries around the world have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them. Those countries now recognize what brilliant investors like Warren Buffett and great companies like Google and Intel have recognized and known for years, that is, that Israel is the innovation nation, the place for cutting-edge technology in agriculture, in water, in cybersecurity, in medicine, in autonomous vehicles. You name it, we have got it.

Those countries now also recognize Israel's exceptional capabilities in fighting terrorism. In recent years, Israel has provided intelligence that has prevented dozens of major terrorist attacks around the world. We have saved countless lives. Members may not know it, but their Governments do. And they are working closely together with Israel to keep their countries and its citizens safe.

I stood here last year, at this rostrum, and I spoke about that profound change in Israel's standing around the world (see A/71/PV.14). Just look at what has happened since. In one year, hundreds of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and other leaders have visited Israel — many for the first time. Of those many visits, two were truly historic. In May, President Trump became the first American President to include Israel in his first visit abroad. President Trump stood at the Western Wall, at the foot of the Temple Mount, where the Jewish people's temples stood for nearly 1,000 years. When the President touched those ancient stones, he touched our hearts forever.

In July, Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. Some here may have seen the pictures. We were on a beach in Hadera. We rode together in a Jeep outfitted with a portable desalination device that some thriving Israeli entrepreneur invented. We took off our shoes, waded into the Mediterranean and drank seawater that had been purified only a few minutes earlier. We imagined the endless possibilities for Israel, for India and for all of humankind.

In the past year, Israel has hosted many world leaders. I had the honour of representing my country on six different continents in one year. I went to Africa, where I saw Israeli innovators increasing crop yields, turning air into water, fighting AIDS. I went to Asia, where we deepened our relations with China and Singapore, and expanded our cooperation with our Muslim friends in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. I went to Europe, where, in London and Paris, Thessaloniki and Budapest we enhanced our security and economic ties. I went to Australia, becoming the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit our great allies down under. And just last week, I went to South America, visiting Argentina and Colombia, and then I went on to Mexico — becoming, if members can believe it, the

first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Latin America. After 70 years, the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world.

In one year, I visited six continents. It is true that I have not yet visited Antarctica, but I want to go there too, because I have heard that penguins are also enthusiastic supporters of Israel. Members laugh. But penguins have no difficulty recognizing that some things are black or white, are right or wrong. Unfortunately, when it comes to United Nations decisions about Israel, that simple recognition is too often absent. It was absent last December, when the Security Council adopted anti-Israel resolution 2334 (2016), which set back the cause of peace.

It was absent last May, when the World Health Organization — one has to listen to this — adopted a Syrian-sponsored draft resolution that criticized Israel for health conditions on the Golan Heights. As the great John McEnroe would say, "You cannot be serious!" That is preposterous. Syria has barrel-bombed, starved, gassed and murdered hundreds of thousands of its own citizens, and wounded millions more, while Israel has provided life-saving medical care to thousands of Syrian victims of that very same carnage. Yet who does the World Health Organization criticize? Israel.

Is there no limit to United Nations absurdities when it comes to Israel? Apparently not, because in July, UNESCO declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage Site. That is worse than fake news; that is fake history. While it is true that Abraham, the father of both Ishmael and Isaac, is buried there, so are Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah — who just happen to be patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. Members will not read about that in the latest UNESCO report. But if members want to read about it, they can in a somewhat weightier publication. It is called the Bible. I highly recommend it. I hear it got four and a half out of five stars on Amazon, and it is a great read. I read it every week.

Let me now be serious. Despite the absurdities, despite the repetition of those farcical events, there is change. Slowly, but surely, there are signs of positive change — even at the United Nations. I very much appreciate the statement of the Secretary-General, indicating that denying Israel's right to exist is anti-Semitism — pure and simple. That is important, because for too long the epicentre of global anti-semitism has been right here at the United Nations. And while it may take many years, I am absolutely confident that the revolution of Israel's ties with individual nations will ultimately be reflected here in this Hall of nations. I say that because there is also a marked change in the position of some of our key friends. Thanks to President Trump's unequivocal support for Israel in this organ, that positive change is gathering force. I thank President Trump for supporting Israel at the United Nations, and I thank Ambassador Nikki Haley for her support. I thank them for speaking the truth about Israel.

Here at the United Nations we must also speak the truth about Iran, as President Trump did so powerfully this morning (see A/72/PV.3). I served as Ambassador to the United Nations and I am a long-serving Israeli Prime Minister, so I have listened to countless speeches in this Hall. But I can say this — none were bolder, none were more courageous and forthright, than the one delivered by President Trump today. President Trump rightly called the nuclear deal with Iran "an embarrassment". I could not agree with that more. Here is why — Iran vows to destroy my country every day. That vow was repeated by its Chief of Staff the other day. Iran is conducting a campaign of conquest across the Middle East. And Iran is developing ballistic missiles to threaten the entire world.

Two years ago (see A/70/PV.22), I stood here and explained why the Iranian nuclear deal not only did not block Iran's path to the bomb, but actually paved it. That is because the restrictions placed on Iran's nuclear programme have what is called a "sunset clause". Let me explain what that term means. It means that in a few years those restrictions will be automatically removed, not by a change in Iran's behaviour, not by a lessening of its terror or its aggression, but merely by a change in the calendar. I warned that when that sunset came, a dark shadow would be cast over the entire Middle East and the world — because Iran would then be free to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, placing it on the threshold of a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons.

That is why I said two years ago that the greater danger was not that Iran would rush to a single bomb by breaking the deal, but that Iran would be able to build many bombs by keeping the deal. In the past few months we have all seen how dangerous even a few nuclear weapons can be in the hands of a small rogue regime. Imagine the danger of hundreds of nuclear weapons in the hands of a vast Iranian Islamist empire, with the missiles to deliver them anywhere on Earth. I know that there are those who still defend the dangerous deal with

Iran, arguing that it will block Iran's path to the bomb. That is exactly what they said about the nuclear deal with North Korea, and we all know how that turned out. Unfortunately, if nothing changes, this deal will turn out exactly the same way.

That is why Israel's policy regarding the nuclear deal with Iran is very simple — change it or cancel it, fix it or nix it. Nixing the deal means restoring massive pressure on Iran, including crippling sanctions, until Iran fully dismantles its nuclear-weapon capabilities. Fixing the deal requires many things, among them inspecting military sites and any other site that is suspect, and penalizing Iran for every violation. Above all, fixing the deal means getting rid of the sunset clause. Beyond fixing this bad deal, we must also stop Iran's development of ballistic missiles and roll back its growing aggression in the region.

I remember we have had these debates. As members know, I took a fairly active role in them. Many supporters of the deal naively believed that it would somehow moderate Iran and make it a "responsible" member of the international community. I strongly disagreed. I warned that, when the sanctions on Iran would be removed, Iran would behave like a hungry tiger unleashed — not joining the community of nations, but devouring nations one after the other. That is precisely what Iran is doing today. From the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from Tehran to Tartus, an Iranian curtain is descending across the Middle East. Iran spreads that curtain of tyranny and terror over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere. And it pledges to extinguish the light of Israel. Today I have a simple message for Ayatollah Khamenei, the dictator of Iran: the light of Israel will never be extinguished.

Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril. Israel will defend itself with the full force of our arms and the full power of our convictions. We will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria for its air, sea and ground forces. We will act to prevent Iran from producing deadly weapons, in Syria or in Lebanon, for use against us. And we will act to prevent Iran from opening new terror fronts against Israel along our northern border. As long as Iran's regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel.

But I also have a message today for the people of Iran, who are not our enemy. They are our friends. One day my Iranian friends will be free from the evil regime that terrorizes them, hangs gays, jails journalists, tortures political prisoners and shoots innocent women like Neda Soltani, leaving her choking on her own blood on the streets of Tehran. I have not forgotten Neda, and I am sure that neither have members. When the day of liberation for the people of Iran finally comes, the friendship between our two ancient peoples will surely flourish once again.

Israel knows that we are not alone in confronting the Iranian regime. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those in the Arab world who share our hopes for a brighter future. We have made peace with Jordan and Egypt, whose courageous President, Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, I met here last night. I appreciate President Al Sisi's support for peace, and I hope to work closely with him and other leaders in the region to advance peace. Israel is committed to achieving peace with all of our Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians.

Yesterday President Trump and I discussed all of this at great length. I appreciate President Trump's leadership, his commitment to stand by Israel's side, his commitment to advance a peaceful future for all. Together, we can seize the opportunities for peace and together we can confront the great dangers of Iran. The remarkable alliance between the United States and Israel has never been stronger and never been deeper. Israel is deeply grateful for the support of the Trump Administration, the American Congress and the American people.

In this year of historic visits and historic anniversaries, Israel has much to be grateful for. A hundred and twenty years ago, Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress to transform our tragic past into a brilliant future by establishing the Jewish State. One hundred years ago, the Balfour Declaration advanced Herzl's vision by recognizing the right of the Jewish people to a national home in our ancestral homeland. Seventy years ago, the United Nations further advanced that vision by adopting resolution 181 (II), supporting the establishment of a Jewish State. Fifty years ago, we reunited our eternal capital — Jerusalem — achieving a miraculous victory against those who sought to destroy our State. Theodor Herzl was our modern Moses, and his dream has come true. We have returned to the promised land, revived our language, ingathered our exiles and built a modern, thriving democracy.

Tomorrow evening Jews around the world will celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of our new year. It is a time of reflection, and we look back with wonder at the remarkable and miraculous rebirth of our nation. We look ahead with pride to the remarkable contributions Israel will continue to make to all nations. A simple look around will reveal those contributions every day — in the food people eat, the water they drink, the medicines they take, the cars they drive, the cell phones they use and in so many other ways that are transforming our world. It can be seen in the smile of an African mother in a remote village who, thanks to an Israeli innovation, no longer must walk eight hours a day to bring water to her children. It can be seen in the eyes of an Arab child who has flown to Israel to undergo a lifesaving heart operation. And it can be seen in the faces of the people in earthquake-stricken Haiti and Nepal, who are rescued from the rubble and g new life by Israeli doctors.

As the prophet Isaiah said: "I have made you a unto the nations, to be My salvation to the ends o Earth." Today, 2,700 years after Isaiah spoke t prophetic words, Israel is becoming a rising p among the nations. And, at long last, its light is shi across the continents, bringing hope and salvatio the ends of the Earth. Happy new year from Israel

The Acting President: On behalf of the Ge Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister o State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister o State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.